

Tscherim Soobzokov

Richard Breitman
American University

Tscherim Soobzokov served Nazi Germany, Jordan, and the United States in succession. He worked for the CIA for about seven years (1952-59). Severely injured by a pipe bomb placed outside his house in Paterson, New Jersey on August 15, 1985, he died three weeks later. His still unsolved murder was likely connected with his controversial past, illuminated in his newly declassified CIA file and other related files.

In August 1942 an SS or SD (Security Service) officer with German forces invading the North Caucasus Mountain region of the Soviet Union recruited Soobzokov. He then became chief of police in his home town of Tachtamukai and a member of the Field Gendarmerie. He later mentioned that he was attached to SS troops.¹ Eventually, under the pressure of repeated CIA polygraph examinations, he also conceded that he had participated in an execution commando and had searched North Caucasian villages for Jews and Komsomol (Young Communist) members.²

In 1943-44 Soobzokov recruited reliable Circassians for an SS-sponsored Caucasian Legion. In early 1945 he received appointment as a first lieutenant in the Waffen-SS, the military branch of the SS.

¹ SA John Joseph Reid, Jr. to SAC, Newark, December 5, 1961, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 65, Classification 105, Box 168, HQ 105-71208-Bulky 13. It appears that the Waffen-SS Division Wiking was the first German unit to reach the region in which Tachtamukai was located. Erich Kern, Der grosse Rausch: das Buch der Ostfront (Waiblingen, 1950), 91-92.

² A German wartime document, a copy of which is in Soobzokov's CIA file, shows that he was authorized to search all villages in the area. **See attached document.** Soobzokov's admission that his purpose was to look for Jews and Komsomol members is first mentioned explicitly in a July 19, 1974 memo written by Soobzokov's former supervisor in the CIA. The date when Soobzokov admitted it is not clear from the file, which is incomplete. There are, however, earlier hints of his purpose in Soobzokov's 1958 Biography of an Emigrant, a copy of which is also in NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File. The CIA polygraphed Soobzokov seven times; four of the exam findings survive in this newly declassified file.

With the help of the International Refugee Organization, he and a group of about 200 Circassians emigrated from Italy to Jordan in 1947. Soobzokov worked for a time as an agricultural engineer for the Iraq Petroleum Company and then for the city of Amman.

The CIA recruited Soobzokov (who was given the codename “Nostril”) in Jordan as an informant and as a spotter of Circassians who might be sent on missions to infiltrate the Soviet Caucasus. After he was polygraphed, a CIA official noted in early 1953: “Subject has consistent and pronounced reactions to all questions regarding war crimes, and is, no doubt, hiding a number of activities from us on that point.” But “clear evidence of a war crimes record might also serve as a possible control.”³ Given CIA employment in Jordan for several years, Soobzokov continued to work part-time for the CIA after he emigrated to the U. S. with his family in June 1955. In August 1958 Soobzokov also began to serve as a source for the FBI.⁴

Another CIA polygraph and debriefing of Soobzokov led a CIA examiner to determine that he “was an incorrigible fabricator ... who could not afford to tell the complete truth about his past without seriously jeopardizing his future.” As a result, Soobzokov was severed from CIA in January 1960.⁵

Nonetheless, Soobzokov obtained American citizenship. On Sept. 27, 1960 and December 6, 1960 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) asked CIA for any derogatory information on Soobzokov in its files. CIA responded that they had no derogatory information on Soobzokov that would preclude his naturalization.⁶

³ Chief of Base, Pullach to Chief, NR, March 19, 1953, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File

⁴ SAC Newark to Director FBI, Aug. 27, 1958, NARA, RG 65, Classification 105, Box 168.

⁵ Chief, Interrogation Research Division, CIA, to Chief, Security Support Division, December 14, 1959, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File. **See attached document excerpt.**

⁶ He became an American citizen on April 17, 1961. NARA, RG 85, Soobzokov INS File. **See attached document.**

During the 1960s accusations that Soobzokov had committed war crimes for the Nazis emerged from within the faction-ridden Circassian community of northern New Jersey, but FBI investigators could not obtain solid evidence against him. In 1974 Soobzokov was listed publicly as one of a number of Nazi war criminals in the U. S. Soobzokov turned to a previous CIA superior for advice and assistance against an investigation opened by INS. In August 1975 the CIA's Deputy Director of Operations wrote the INS that, although the CIA had "unresolved doubts" about Soobzokov, it had no evidence he was involved in war crimes during his work for the German army, and "during the seven years he worked for this Agency, Subject did perform useful service in the United States Government, and ... he did volunteer for extremely hazardous missions."⁷ Soobzokov then counterattacked aggressively, with libel suits against CBS and the *New York Times* and a statement of support in the House of Representatives by Congressman Robert Roe. In June 1976 INS terminated its investigation of him.⁸

In 1980 the new Office of Special Investigations in the Justice Department dropped its denaturalization case against Soobzokov after the CIA found in its files a State Department form on which Soobzokov, in 1952, had listed accurately some (not all) of his Nazi connections at the time he applied for a visa.⁹ In support of Soobzokov's application, however, in 1953 the CIA had sent the State Department one of Soobzokov's

⁷ Deputy Director for Operations, CIA, to Commissioner, INS, August 1975, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File.

⁸ Footnote INS file.

⁹ OSI apparently did not believe it could prove that Soobzokov had lied to gain entrance to the U. S. The CIA copy of the State Department V-30 form, dated August 19, 1952, is in Soobzokov's CIA name file, NARA, RG 263.

mendacious versions, according to which he served in the Soviet army, surrendered to the Germans, and spent the war as a POW.¹⁰

The CIA showed bad judgment in employing and assisting a man who served as an officer in a criminal organization, admitted having committed some war crimes, and consistently lied about his past.

¹⁰ Deputy Director for Plans, CIA, to Secretary of State, Attention Stanley Smigel, November 16, 1953, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File.

-attachment (b) to RJA-A- 5157

SECRET INFORMATION

Translation of above document from German to English

The Mayor of the area

date 30.12.1942

TACHTAMUKAI

PERMIT

The Oberloutnant and Chief of the Circassian Field Police Tscherin SCOBZOKOV born on 1.1.1918 in Tachtamukai, North Caucasus is authorized to search all villages in my area.

Authority: Special order from German Field Command No. 548 of 26.12.1942 E/No. 704/42.

This permit is valid together with soldier book No. 145783 issued by the commanding officer of the SS and SD Bureau in Krasnodar on 15.10.42.

SEAL

The Mayor (signature) /Chatit/

Secretary (signature) /Schaudjan/

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Immigration and Naturalization Service

2201-45263

District	NEW
Sub-office	

File No.	A10 083 288 kdp
Date	December 6, 1960

DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
2430 E Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C.

Attention: DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PLANS

Please furnish any derogatory information that may be contained in your files concerning the following person.

NAME (Surname in CAPS, First, Middle) SOOBZOKOV, TSCHERIM		DATE OF BIRTH 8/24/24	SEX Male	COLOR Cau	MARITAL STATUS S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
ALIASES (Identify maiden name or nicknames) SHOWABZOQA, ABDEL-KARIM		PLACE OF BIRTH (City, province or state & country) USSR	PRESENT NATIONALITY Jordan		
PARENTS' NAMES (Include present address, if known)					
HEIGHT 5'10"	WEIGHT 175	EYES Brown	HAIR black	COMPLEXION Fair	IDENTIFYING MARKS OR SCARS None
RESIDENCE LAST FIVE YEARS (Street & No., RFD, etc.) 58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J. 47 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.			FROM 1959 6/55	TO present 1959	
PRIOR RESIDENCES, IF AVAILABLE					
EMPLOYMENT LAST FIVE YEARS (Employer's name and address) Color Plasaicr Co, Paterson, N.J. Mutual Life Ins. Co., NYC		OCCUPATION OR PROFESSION worker	FROM 5/60	TO present	
PRIOR OCCUPATIONS (Not included in above)					
SPOUSE (Full name & any other names used, & present address, if not same as above) Hoshmashio			DATE OF BIRTH 5/27/26 PLACE OF BIRTH (City, province or state & country) USSR		
ORGANIZATIONS (Include any societies, clubs, etc., with which now or previously affiliated) None					
LAST ADMISSION TO U.S. (Date, port and status) LEB 10 1961			PRIOR ENTRIES AND DEPARTURES (Dates and ports or if numerous, list years when previously in U.S.)		
PREVIOUS NUMBERS ASSIGNED (Milit. S/N; passport; social security; FBI; etc., identify each) LEB 10 1961			PREVIOUS REPORTS FURNISHED BY FBI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If yes attach list of reports.		
REASON FOR REQUEST APPLICANT FOR: <input type="checkbox"/> ADM. TO U.S. <input type="checkbox"/> NATZ		DEPORTATION PROCEEDINGS <input type="checkbox"/> BENEF. PB #: <input type="checkbox"/> SPONSOR PB #:	FOR RELIEF OF 19		

RETURN TO
INVESTIGATIONS
U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
119 D St., N.E.
Washington 25, D.C.

(3)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Assistant Commissioner
Investigations

Commissioner (COINV)
Washington, D. C.

ALO 083 288
July 24, 1974

District Director (DIINV)
Newark, New Jersey

SOEBZOKOV, Tscherim, Alleged Nazi War Criminal

Through Official Channels

The Subject entered the United States as a lawful permanent resident on June 28, 1955 at New York, New York. His immigrant visa was issued by the American Embassy, Amman, Jordan. It contains a certificate by an unknown person attesting to the birth of the Subject in Tachtamukai, Caucasus, Russia, on January 1, 1918. His birth date is reflected as such in his file until 1960 when he petitioned for citizenship. At that time it is given as August 24, 1924.

This difference in birth dates was reported in a news article in the New York Daily News on July 15, 1974 by reporter Paul Meskil who also contacted the Subject and asked him to explain the differences. The Subject would not respond to his question.

On several occasions the Subject has contacted this office to ascertain the progress of the investigation and to denounce the articles appearing in the area newspapers. On more than one occasion he has stated that if the Service would contact the Central Intelligence Agency all of the questions about his birth date and past activities would be answered. He claims that he has been active with that Agency since 1955.

As stated previously the Subject submitted a form G-135 on September 27, 1960 relative to his petition for citizenship. A copy of this form was forwarded to the C.I.A., but no response was received. An additional form dated December 6, 1960 was submitted, concerning which, the Agency contacted the Assistant District Director, Washington, D. C. questioning the reason for the request. This office responded directly to that Agency who returned the Form G-135a stating they had no derogatory information concerning the Subject that would preclude him from becoming naturalized. A copy of each of the foregoing is attached for your ready reference.

In view of the high priority placed on this investigation it is requested that the Director, Central Intelligence Agency be contacted to determine if their records concerning the Subject contain any information that could be of assistance to this Service, and whether or not it could be made available to us.

FOR THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

[Signature]
Assistant District Director, Inv.

[Signature]
JWP/bt

167

TO : Chief, Security Support Division DATE: 14 December 1959

ATTN : ☐ ☐

FROM : Chief, Interrogation Research Division

SUBJECT: S.F. #79367

IRD #25817

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Subject of this report is a thirty-five-year-old married male, an alien of Circassian origin, who has been covertly utilized by this Agency since 1952.

2. Subject was previously polygraphed on : 23 February 1953; 25 February 1956; 13 December 1956; 24 August 1957; 17 October 1957 (by two different examiners); and 22 April 1958. After the April 1958 polygraph interview (which was specific in scope and did not touch on questions dealing with Subject's bonafides), IRD recommended a thorough debriefing of Subject at the first opportunity. This recommendation was concurred in by the CI Staff, and consequently, the SR/DOB interrogation specialist ☐ ☐ attempted to resolve the discrepancies considered to exist in Subject's autobiography.

3. The result of the SR/DOB debriefing is contained in Attachment "A." A review of this SR/DOB debriefing by IRD disclosed vague generalities and certain inconsistencies. Furthermore, some of the given facts were found to be at variance with known Soviet reality. This review was made a matter of record by IRD through a memorandum to the CI Staff (see Attachment "B").

4. Subject was currently debriefed and polygraphed at a covert site in Washington, D.C. on 19 and 20 November 1959 at the request of ☐ SR/DOB. The debriefing was based on a requirement, submitted by ☐ ☐ CI/OA, stipulating that prior to renewing Subject's OA, Subject would have to clarify and explain satisfactorily discrepancies evident in his autobiography. The entire interview was conducted in the Russian language.

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the current debriefing was to resolve the discrepancies still apparent in Subject's personal history. Although Subject had previously undergone many interrogations, both with and without the aid of the polygraph, it was still evident, from a review of his file,

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2005

S.F. #79367
14 December 1959

including his latest straight debriefing conducted by SR/DOB in October 1958, that Subject continued to fabricate certain parts of his past. If, at the completion of this debriefing, the examiner obtained new pertinent information about Subject, the latter would then be given a polygraph test to check out the validity of the newly acquired information.

2. At the start of the first day's debriefing, Subject was informed of its (the debriefing's) purpose. He was cautioned that a repetition of his previous attempts at deception would not be beneficial to him or to his future. Subject said that he fully understood the importance of the debriefing session and assured the examiner that "not one single word of untruth" would come from his lips during the current interview.

3. Subject reiterated his previously given reasons for his fabrications and attempts at deception. (Noted in IRD #25817 reports dated: 27 August 1957, paragraph III, sub-paragraph 24; May 1958, paragraph II, sub-paragraph 1-4; SR/DOB debriefing report, dated 22 October 1958, page 16, last paragraph.) However, he strongly emphasized the fact that his biography, as given to [] (SR/DOB debriefing, October 1958), was the absolute truth.

4. In answer to the questions of how he was able, in the past, to be so consistent in giving a deceitful autobiography, Subject stated that he always had an "outline form" where the main points of his false autobiography were recorded. Consequently, whenever he was called upon to submit facts about his personal history, he would always refer to this "outline form" and come up with a consistent (fabricated) autobiography. Subject was asked whether he had in his possession, this "outline form." He replied in the negative.

5. The entire first day, 19 November, was spent debriefing Subject on his past in the Soviet Union and Germany up to 1945. It became evident after the first hour of debriefing that the information Subject was contributing (to the examiner) did not correspond with the information he gave [] in the last debriefing. Subject was allowed to give his version of each phase of his life. When he concluded each phase, he would be confronted with and questioned about the discrepancies existing between the information he gave the examiner, and that which he had given []. In some cases he stated that he lied to [] and that the current version was the true one; in other instances, when confronted with conflicting versions, he would try to squirm out of the situation by attempting to give an explanation for the conflict. This explanation was usually very weak; at times, completely illogical and unconvincing; and, in other instances, an out-and-out lie.

S.F. #79367
14 December 1959

6. At the conclusion of the first day's debriefing, after Subject was confronted with numerous facts which reflected that his current autobiographical version was in conflict with information previously given by him, he begged that he be given some time to think and consolidate his thoughts and facts about his past--in fact, he offered to spend the night of 19 November writing his autobiography. The examiner agreed and debriefing was terminated for that day.

7. When Subject came in on 20 November, he referred to some rough notes which he had scribbled the night before (he had not written out a complete autobiography as he had promised) and repeated the same basic autobiographical version, specifically concerning the areas in which he was caught lying the day before. The examiner was convinced beyond all doubt that Subject had again reverted to the use of his "outline form" to refresh his memory. Subject, however, denied that he consulted or made reference to any "form" to refresh his memory.

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The following additional information, developed during Subject's current debriefing, is set down in synopsis form. An elaboration and the details relating to each of the points noted is contained in the "Details of the Report" section.

- a. Subject admitted that he was recruited by German Intelligence in 1942 to work as their informer against the Circassians (his own people).
- b. Subject said he was instructed by a representative of German Intelligence, in 1942, to "volunteer" for service with the 835th Circassian Battalion so that he could perform his "informer" duties more efficiently.
- c. Subject admitted to current correspondence with his relatives and friends, and with his wife's relatives in USSR (since late 1957).
- d. Subject stated that he was never in Belostok as he previously claimed, but was somewhere in the Vil'nius Oblast' while serving his one-year prison sentence (from 1940 to 1941).
- e. Subject admitted that he falsified the extent of his education.

S.F. #79367

14 December 1959

- f. Subject admitted that he was a ~~seal~~-deserter from the German Army for eleven months after his release from the hospital in the summer of 1943.
- g. Minor unresolved discrepancies noted in the "Details of the Report" section.
- h. Continued unresolved discrepancies regarding his activities while under German jurisdiction (1943-1945).

CONCLUSION

1. On the basis of current debriefing and polygraph testing, as well as from observation of Subject's behavior during this debriefing, it is the examiner's opinion that Subject is an incorrigible fabricator who is still attempting deception about his past.

2. Subject's explanation for initially attempting to falsify and fabricate part of his autobiography to the Americans may have been originally understandable in light of the existing circumstances, as Subject explained them. It was his desire to increase his (Subject's) personal stature and importance in the eyes of those (Germans and Americans) interested in utilizing him. Subject also wished to maintain continuity with his previously given false autobiographical version to the Americans in Aachen, so that he could immigrate to the United States (Reference: SR/DOB debriefing, dated October 1958, page 15, paragraph 4-6, Attach. 111). However, the above points cannot be accepted, at this time, as reasons for his continued attempts at deception to the American authorities. At present, there is no one left to impress with Subject's non-existent stature and capability; neither is there any necessity to maintain continuity of a fabricated autobiographical version to facilitate his entrance into the United States. As Subject himself informed this examiner, he now realizes, and is convinced, that American Intelligence is interested more in Subject's capabilities than in what Subject says he can do. Yet, even though Subject is aware of this existing situation—in fact, he has realized it since the August 1957 debriefing—and knows that further fabrication will not help his case, he persists in fabricating and attempting deception about his past during every session spent with him. He lied during his last two debriefing sessions, the SR/DOB debriefing in October 1958, and the first day (19 November 1959) of the current debriefing.

3. If Subject does not have the capacity or the inclination to relate only the unvarnished truth about himself and his past, and if he

S.F. #79367
14 December 1959

continues to falsify and fabricate about his past, then possibly a re-appraisal of Subject should be considered prior to utilizing him in the future.

4. The examiner can only draw one final conclusion about Subject and his unceasing deceitful attempts during interrogation. The reason why Subject is continuing deception about his background must be so important and pertinent to Subject's welfare that he cannot afford to tell the complete truth about his past without seriously jeopardizing his future.

5. No further polygraph testing of Subject is recommended. The current polygraph testing was attempted only because Subject gave additional data which heretofore he had not divulged. However, after polygraph testing, it is still evident that Subject is practicing deception.

DETAILS OF THE REPORT

1. Information obtained during the debriefing of Subject is set forth in the same order as received from Subject with particular reference to the discrepancies as they were uncovered. To further underline the extent of Subject's fabrications, these false versions are reported in chronological order, in a side-by-side comparative form--i.e., the current version, which is supposed to be the unvarnished truth, as compared to the former versions (specifically the SR/DOB, October 1958 version), as well as other earlier statements made by Subject to his debriefers.

DEBRIEFING ON 19 NOVEMBER 1959

Subject's Current Version

Name - Tacherin
Subject has a Jordanian passport which lists his name as Abdel Karim SHOWABZQA (SR-IRD), K/A Tacherin

Date of Birth - 24 August 1924

Subject's Previous Versions

Same information on all other debriefings.

SR/DOB and August 1957 Debriefings - 24 August 1924.

All debriefings prior to August 1957 - 1 January 1918